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## Student Academic Performance

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## Abstract

The research paper investigates the effects of demographic, family and student-specific factors on students' academic success measured by cumulative GPA. The research is based on four years of longitudinal survey of undergraduate students from year 2014 to 2017. The main purpose of this paper is to establish the relative impact of the factors listed above and consequently to make policy recommendations for improvements in academic performance. Previous studies have found significant impact of parent education, family support, socio-economic characteristics, student habits and health issues on student academic performance. Since this paper is based upon survey data responses of VU undergraduates, the role of religion is expected to be a significant factor in academic performance. There are plenty of studies showing relation between academic success and religiousness of student. The reasons for the positive impact of religion on educational performance is explained as the avoidance of risky activities by more religious students, being committed to goals. Besides that, religious commitment and church attendance fosters students' sense of community and social responsibility. This eventually has positive impact on how students perform academically. The religiousness of students is measured in the scale of 0 to 5, 5 showing high commitment to religion. The scores are created on the basis of responses to ten survey questions such as the role of religious belief on approach to life, time spent on growth in understanding in faith and so on. These questions are answered on a 1 to 5 scale and the final score is obtained by summing the values and dividing by the number of questions.

Ordinary Least Squares methodology has been applied to the survey data to estimate the relative impact of performance determinants. Initial findings suggest that family support is a significant determinant of performance. Also significant for student GPA are family support and student-specific attributes such as well-defined academic goals, student focus and self confidence

levels. These results are based on first year student survey responses. The findings suggest that absence of family support lowers student GPA score by about 19 percent relative to the group that benefits from family support. Well-defined academic goals account for a GPA increase of 1.5 percent. Future research will expand to include all four years of survey data responses using panel data estimation techniques to obtain precise estimates of the main causes of improvement in student performance.